



# QUALITY SPORT CLUB – IN THE INTERPRETATION OF ARISTOTLE'S JUSTICE THEORY

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## ABSTRACT

Nowadays there are many ways to rate and classify sport clubs. Besides the classically measurable aspects (economical, social, customer-oriented, modern, international, etc ...) 'soft factors' also play a key quality role, such as justice. How can a sport club be just and fair? Why do we begin with Aristotle's thoughts of justice? In Aristotle's thoughts, the issue of happiness and justice plays a central role in determining what virtuous life is. Sport clubs are interested in establishing a fair functioning. Along this moral dimension, members can more easily accept the management's decisions, if these decisions are fair. The study shows that Aristotle's ideas about justice and fairness can play a key role even nowadays, in terms of quality and social status. The study is based on Aristotle's thoughts on justice. His thoughts on justice and fairness are based on the teleological thinking with the definition of the telos. According to Aristotle, the discussions of the justice are about the virtue, the esteem, the nature of the good life, and the compliance. According to Aristotle justice means: give the people what they deserve, what is due to them. This is based on excellence, because then the others reach the best position, too. The ideas of the Aristotelian justice have a positive impact on the qualification and judgment of sport clubs. In addition: Aristotle's teleological thinking and theory of justice can be perfectly applied by nowadays' sport clubs. The main goal is to identify and define the telos of competitive and the non-competitive sport clubs. Based on that it can be decided, what kind of abilities and skills deserve high regard and reward within the sport clubs. In this regard, justice can exist in the sport clubs and we can talk about "justice sport clubs", and this will be interpreted as a positive quality factor.

**KEYWORDS:** justice, fairness, telos, excellence, sport club.

## Introduction to Antique philosophy and Aristotle's timeless thoughts

There are countless ways to assess and classify today's sport clubs. Besides the "standard" measurable aspects (economical, social, customer-oriented, modern, international, etc ...) "soft factors" also play a key role in quality, such as justice. How can a sport club be just and fair? Why did we call for Aristotle's thoughts of justice?

One central issue of the ancient Greek philosophy - besides the explanations of natural phenomena - is to find the way to the virtuous life: search for happiness and justice. According to Aristotle we have to strive to reach the happiness as the greatest good. Finding the golden mean, while avoiding extremes. Besides Aristotle's happiness thoughts, his thoughts on justice define today's philosophy as well. If we adapt these theories, we can apply them in the field of sports philosophy and of qualification of sport clubs. Plato was Aristotle's master and friend, with whom he argued a lot. According to Aristotle, friendship is based on virtue, which needs to be developed together and for which sacrifices need to be made. With little trouble, we can do a great service. According to Aristotle not only Plato, but the truth is regarded as a friend as well, and out of these, the truth should be in the first place. This is considered the sacred duty. Unlike Plato, Aristotle's thoughts started from the observation and made their way to generalization (Lengyel, 1981).

## Introduction to Aristotle's theory of justice

Why is the starting point Aristotle's theory of justice? Aristotle places the virtuous life in focus and mentions the justice as a greatest virtuous. He says, justice can only be that which is virtuous too. Justice is the only virtue what people can practice not only over themselves but also over others. The best satisfy both. Besides the (relatively to other things) perfect virtue he mentions the partial virtue with the distributive and the corrective justice. Latter is not a geometric scale: someone committed something against someone. This can be voluntary (loans, purchase and sale) and involuntary (violence, fraud). A different justice exists in the exchange and in the trade. The goods are always exchanged but since their value is not equal, money is introduced. According to Aristotle there is an ex post distributive justice, a kind of "middle" which is based on the principle that everyone gets as much as he deserves (Aristotle, 2011).

This means that the greatest ethical virtue is justice. People need to strive for just actions: which are compliant with law and are equal according to the law. Act compliant with the law are always fair – as Aristotle expressed it for the free Greek statesman. This idea can be put into the laws of sport clubs. It is important to distinguish between naturally (e.g. our one hand is stronger) and not naturally (based on an agreement) justice elements. Just and unjust deeds only exist, if we do it voluntarily (in case of duress is not valid). Equally exists: There are acts based on error (mistake), unjust acts (because of anger and passion) as well as the bad deeds (through preliminary considerations). Can we be fair with ourselves? A person is unjust to himself, if he lets the mindless part of the soul to take over the reasonable part of the soul (Aristotle, 2011).

Justice is about honour. Therefore, the leadership of the sport clubs also needs to appreciate its members. In Aristotle's times the leadership of the polis distributed the goods among the citizens. They were the shareholders and the beneficiaries. Why can not this be used in case of sport clubs, so that the sport club's management distribute the goods? To do this, first we must define who can perform acts of justice. Aristotle considers the following types of people who are able to execute justice acts: statesman (who shares rights and rewards), the judge who imposes punishment, and the farmers and craftsmen who exchange their goods at fair prices (Aristotle, 2011, Book I.). If we look at this issue in relation to today's sport clubs then, accordingly, the leaders and the members of sport clubs are also able to make justice decisions.

In Aristotle's determination of a virtuous life, happiness and justice play a key role. It is in the interest of a sport club to establish just and fair. Along this moral dimension, members can more easily accept management decisions if they are fair and strive for happiness (Zimányi, Vermes, 2016). What does it mean: "good sport club's life", and what does it mean: "justice by a sport club"? Can a sport club be Aristotelian minded only if we talk about justice after defining what the good life is? Do people really get what they deserve? Can we fix the virtue-based justice as the starting point and can we adapt it for the sport clubs' life?

## The goal of the study

The study shows, that Aristotle's ideas about justice and fairness play a key role in the life of today's sport club in terms of qualification and social perception. Besides the fair sport clubs' life, the study shows the possible ways and methods of leading a fair sport club – in the spirit of Aristotle's theory of justice. The study will be based on practical examples, which demonstrate that this "justice approach" can be a quality distinguishing factor between sport clubs. In the study we distinguish competitive and non-competitive (recreational) sport clubs. Only one truth exists, however, the basic criteria of the quality is the telos, which required existence depends on the right application of the justice. Therefore, it is crucial to differentiate between the sport clubs' type. Because they have a different telos which may affect the fair decision.

## Relationship between sport clubs' justice and the telos

The study is based on Aristotle's theory of justice. These justice and fairness thoughts are based on his teleological ideas, specifying the telos. What does telos mean in Aristotle's theory? Telos is the goal, the essential nature (Aristotle, 2011). On the basis of this, it can be decided, what kind of abilities and skills deserve recognition and reward in practice (sport clubs' telos and the recognition of merits).

According to Aristotle we do not need subjective individual opinions – discussions on justice are about the virtues, the honor, the adequacy and the nature of the good life. Virtues are valuable because they lead to long-term happiness – primarily not that of the individual but the community's happiness. According to Aristotle, justice can be interpreted as a cardinal virtue and it means: give the people what they deserve, which is due to them. It can be determined on the basis of

the excellence and the others will be in the best position. According to the ancient Greek concept, happy life includes the practice of excellence: learn to use our powers. The right use of powers is a precondition for a happy life (Aristotle, 2011).

These thoughts apply equally to the competitive and to the non-competitive (recreational) sport clubs, but we need to differentiate based on the telos. The telos of the competitive sport clubs is achieving the best possible "tangible and measurable" result. In case of the non-competitive sport clubs: the telos is to achieve the appropriate and aspiration level of recreation. A sport club example, based on Aristotle's theory of justice: using a treadmill is fair, if it happens by excellence. Namely, the one who can use it the best, should use it the most. Because this is the sport equipment's sense of existence. That person has to use it, who can make the best results with the sport equipment. We can go in further details with the example. In case of the competitive sport club, the treadmill should be used by that man, who can reach the best time-result with this equipment. Another example: those competitors use the tennis court, who can reach the best results in competitions and have the best chances to win, gaining glory and reputation for the sport club. This is an appearance of the community happiness. For non-competitive sports the situation is different. According to the community interest, everyone should use the treadmill, and everybody should enjoy it who contribute to the community's happiness. On the basis of justice, those people should use the tennis courts who can contribute to the community-building – they can even recruit new members as well. Or we can analyze a yoga class: those people go to this recreation occasion who can identify themselves with the telos of yoga and create a pleasant atmosphere around them. It may be appropriate for individual and group self achievement – and create the community happiness. The key point: on the basis of the telos, we have to make a difference between the competitive and the non-competitive sporting. This decides the application and the realization of the Aristotelian justice. It means, if we want to define the fair method of sharing an asset, we need to look at the purpose of the asset. The essence is, that the final result must be equitable and appropriate. It is just a "positive externality" if in the meantime the highest happiness has been produced for the most. (Therefore Aristotle's thought can not be called a utilitarian conception).

#### Justice as fairness – according to Aristotle

The issue of the fairness is part of the justice as well. The starting point is the approach of Aristotle's telos-based conception. According to this, the primary goal is to determine the essential nature of an asset, which can not be compromised. Therefore, it is important to make a difference between the telos of the competitive and the non-competitive sport (Zimányi, Vermes, 2016). What is fairness about? Fairness means to compensate the disadvantages which is in some cases more than justice. Fairness can be the correction of the law – in justified cases. When does the fairness disappear? At a time when everyone has the same conditions and has the same rights. Thinking about this issue in extreme cases, we can talk about egalitarianism as well. In this case, everyone has absolutely the same rights (Sandel, 2009). What should we let do and whom? Does make sense to call a sport club "fair"? It depends on the telos of the sport club. In case of the competitive sport the telos is achieving the best possible results. In this case the existence of the fairness is questionable. Respectively, if we use the theory of fairness, the telos of the competitive sport may damage. In this case if we use the fairness, nobody will get what he deserves based on the results. Moreover, the principle is breached, according to which the one uses the sport instrument, who knows it best, i.e. who can reach the best result with that instrument. In case of the non-competitive sport the situation is different: the telos can be the happiness and the community building (beside keeping the values of sport of course), which does not contradict to the fairness. This means, that if an instrument is not used by the one who can reach the best measurable result (for example on a treadmill), according to the telos of the non-competitive sport club, this person can still reach the most excellent result: causing happiness and creating community. In most cases, it can not be measured, at least not directly and not in the short run.

#### Sport club leadership – in spirit of the justice

Similar to Aristotle's political thoughts a sport club should be led by individuals who are really engaged to the sport community and pay attention to the raising and educating of the sport clubs' members, shaping their character as well (Aristotle 2011). To achieve this goal – following the model of polis – a sport club community is needed. Since only in a community can someone feel the fulfilment – and promote the correct, virtuous good life. Such a sport club manager is needed, who excel in practicing of the virtues and are rather searching for the justice and for the happiness as the Aristotelian greatest good. Happiness can exist also in the life of a sport club, based on well-founded research, we can talk about happy sport clubs (Zimányi, Vermes, 2016). The practice of the excelled virtues can be manifested while thinking of the common good – because in this case, they also make the most for the sport club. Latter is theoretical, because for the realization it is necessary to have decision-making ability too. Every virtue must be practiced – it also applies to justice, which is a right way to lead a sport club. Because only in this way can we be excellent (we must avoid the coercion, which is a sign of the injustice). How can justice appear in a sport club? In that case, if Aristotle's theory of justice achieves the telos of the competitive and the non-competitive sport club. It means for competitive sport that the leaders support that persons who can most effectively use the sport equipment and who can reach the highest results. In the case of the non-competitive sport the sport club's management has to support that everyone gets what he deserves also on the basis of excellence.

This means, that everyone can use it, who contributes to the excellence. Nevertheless, they should use the sport equipment, who can reach the best (directly not measurable) results for the sport community. This measurability is very complex; this study does not cover this methodology.

#### Conclusion

Aristotle's thoughts on justice have a positive impact on the qualification and social judgement of sport clubs and on the social perception. Aristotle's nearly 2.500-year-old's thoughts are still relevant for today's sport clubs. We can perfectly adapt Aristotle's teleological and justice theory for the sport clubs. The key point is to find and define the telos of the sport club in order to decide, what abilities and skills deserve recognition and reward, based on excellence – pursuant to which the sport club can be called fair. In case of competitive sport we have to accept the results-orientation which is based on the excellence as well. In case of non-competitive sport clubs, the society can judge the strive for happiness and community-building positively. This can be interpreted equally as a quality factor – since justice is one important aspect of the qualification, just like in case of sport clubs. In the study the justice was always interpreted as a virtue and it is not allowed to deviate from this nature. This means, both the sport clubs' leaders and the members should behave virtuously, including fairly. Only then can we talk about fair sport club – in the spirit of Aristotle. There are different types of sport clubs according to different theories of justice. The study confirms: the Aristotelian theory of justice is a possible way towards the quality sport clubs. But this can only work if the sport clubs leaders and the (future) sport clubs members can identify themselves with these thoughts. If all this succeeds, Aristotle's theory of justice can work in practice as well – then can we talk about fair sport clubs. All of this can be an asset and a distinctive appearance of the qualification and rating of sport clubs.

#### Future research areas

This study deals with Aristotle's ideas of justice and fairness, which is based on a teleological thinking with the definition of the telos. In the future, we can research Aristotle's thoughts about friendship and donation. Both can contribute to create a virtuous life within a sport club. Besides justice, many other virtue, appreciated by both ancient and modern times, can be a distinctive quality factor between sport clubs, which influences individuals in finding the most suitable sport club for them selves. Besides Aristotle's theory of justice many other theories of justice exist. If we understand and follow other justice-based theories, we can define other criteria for the qualifications of sport clubs. For example, from Bentham's utilitarianism across Mill and Kant to Rawls, who argues in favour of equality. Continuing the list, we can research the issue of justice for sport clubs with the theory of the libertarianism, meritocracy and egalitarianism, not forgetting the positive discrimination. Whichever theory of justice is selected and analysed, they will play an important role in today's sport clubs along with social processes, and can become a relevant qualification and rating factor for sport clubs.

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